



Salem/Cumberland County Health Department  
**INFLUENZA**  
(PUBLIC HANDOUT)

**What is the Flu?**

Influenza, also known as “the flu”, is a viral infection of the nose, throat, and lungs. The flu usually spreads from person to person when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks and the virus is sent into the air.

**When does the Flu occur?**

- In New Jersey, the flu usually occurs any time between October through early April.
- However, the flu season is the worst during January and February.

**Is it a cold or the Flu?**

Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	rare in adults and older children, but can be as high as 102° F in infants and small children	usually 102° F, but can go up to 104° F and usually lasts 3 to 4 days
Headache	rare	sudden onset and can be severe
Muscle aches	mild	usual, and often severe
Tiredness & Weakness	mild	often extreme, and can last two or more weeks
Extreme exhaustion	never	sudden onset and can be severe
Runny nose	often	sometimes

**How soon do the symptoms of the Flu occur?**

Symptoms usually start 1 to 3 days after coming in contact with a person that is sick with the flu.



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### **How is the Flu spread?**

- The flu is usually spread person-to-person through the air or through contact.
- The virus is released into the air through the coughing and sneezing of people who are sick. For example: You sneeze, wipe your nose and do not wash your hands immediately.

### **What should I do if I get the flu?**

- Rest and liquids are usually enough, avoid using alcohol and tobacco.

### **How long is an infected person able to spread the Flu?**

- The time in which a person is able to spread the flu varies
- This is why it is important **to stay home** when you have flu-like symptoms.

### **How can I prevent myself from getting the Flu?**

- Get a flu shot or “Flu Mist”

Flu shots are available through your doctor, local health department, visiting nurse associations, and senior centers.

- Frequent hand washing and avoid touching your nose, eyes and mouth.

### **When should I get a Flu shot?**

- October and November are the best times to get a flu shot, but getting the flu shot through March can also offer protection. It is best to get one as early as possible.



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**Are there any side effects of the Flu shot?**

Most people will feel no side effects from the flu shot.

- The virus in the vaccine is dead, so you can not get influenza.
- Some mild side effects: soreness and redness where shot was given, fever and body aches.

**Who should get the Flu shot?**

- People 6 months of age and older are at risk for getting a serious case of the flu or flu difficulties, and people in close contact with them (including all household members) should get a flu shot.

A flu shot is recommended every year for:

- People **50 years of age or older**.
- People who live in **long-term care facilities** that have people with medical conditions.
- People who have **long-term health problems** including:
  - Heart disease
  - Lung cancer
  - Asthma
  - Kidney disease
  - Metabolic disease, such as diabetes
  - Anemia, and other blood disorders
- People with a **weakened immune system** due to:
  - HIV/AIDS or another disease that affects the immune system;
  - Long-term treatment with drugs such as steroids;
  - Cancer treatment with x-rays or drugs.



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- People 6 months to 18 years of age on **long-term aspirin treatment**.
- **Pregnant women** who will be past the 3<sup>rd</sup> month of pregnancy during the flu season (usually November-March, but past March in some years).
- Physicians, nurses, family members, or anyone else coming in **close contact with people at risk** of serious flu.
- Some people should consult with a doctor before getting the vaccine.

### **Are there any other methods of preventing the Flu besides getting a Flu shot?**

A new type of flu vaccine is now available and is sprayed into the nose rather than injected into the muscle. It is called “FluMist”.

### **Who can get “FluMist”?**

“FluMist” is for healthy people between the ages of 5 and 49. Check with your doctor to see if “FluMist” is right for you.